Programme for dalit Muslims and Christians

†*282. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:
SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI

Will the MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has any programme for the welfare of dalit Muslims and dalit Christians;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the use of word 'dalit' in case of Muslims and Christians is proper?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A.R. ANTULAY): (a) to (c) A programme of affirmative action for the minorities, especially for those who are economically and socially backward, has already been announced. The Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities, launched in June, 2006, *inter-alia*, provides for enhancing opportunities for education and ensuring an equitable share for minorities in economic activities and employment by upgradation of skills through technical training and enhanced credit support for self-employment and special consideration to minorities in recruitment to government jobs.

The programme provides for earmarking for the minorities, wherever possible, 15% of outlays and targets of schemes included in the programme and considered amenable to earmarking. For 2007-08, Rs.102466.07 lakh has been earmarked for the minorities under the schemes in this programme.

In addition, three scholarship schemes. have been envisaged exclusively for the minorities, *viz.*, a merit-cum-means scholarship scheme for technical and professional courses at under-graduate and post-graduate levels, a pre-matric and a post-matric scholarship scheme. The merit-cum-means scholarship scheme has already been approved and States/UTs have been advised to take further appropriate action. Besides, an exclusive coaching and allied scheme for minorities has been announced. The corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation has been augmented and the equity of the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation further increased in 2007-08 to enable it to expand its operations and coverage.

Advancement of education among minority communities, especially those who are educationally backward, is accorded high priority. A special package has been formulated for this purpose.

Some sections among the Muslims and Christians figure in the List of Socially and Edûcationally Backward Communities. This being so, the provisions for reservation in appointments for other backward classes are available to them.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.